Don’t Miss out!
File for Fee Reimbursement!

Cost-Share Reimbursement for Organic Certification fees is NOW AVAILABLE. You can receive 75 percent reimbursement for organic certification fees paid between October 1, 2015, and September 30, 2016, up to $750 per certificate. You must be currently certified organic. All you have to do is fill out two very simple forms and scan or mail them in.

Find the cost-share forms at http://www.nmda.nmsu.edu/marketing/organic-program/application-for-cost-share-reimbursement/.
Mark Your Calendar!

**August 1, 2, 3: Organic Program Meetings**
The New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA) cordially invites you to participate in a meeting to discuss the future of the NMDA Organic Program (Program). The Program, as it is currently structured, is operating at a deficit. Input is sought to look at options which will determine the future of the Program. Meetings have been scheduled in Las Cruces, Portales, and Albuquerque. You are invited to listen in and offer input at the meetings. We will be meeting at:

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<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Date/Location</th>
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<tr>
<td>Las Cruces</td>
<td>August 1</td>
<td>3 – 5pm</td>
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<td></td>
<td>NMDA Conference Room</td>
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<td>3190 South Espina St.</td>
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<td>Portales</td>
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<td>705 East Lime Street</td>
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<td>Albuquerque</td>
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<td>Bernalillo County Extension Office</td>
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If you have any questions about these meetings please call David Lucero at 575-646-4929. Thank you!

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Adios, Michael Diaz!

Michael Diaz resigned from the Organic Program on May 13. Michael served organic farmers, ranchers, and processors around the state for three and a half years as a certifier/inspector for the New Mexico Department of Agriculture Organic Program. Michael brought great expertise to his work along with deep dedication to organic farming and New Mexico’s farmers and ranchers. Thank you, Michael. We’ll miss you — A lot!

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Welcome Ive Eddy

I’m originally from western Kansas where we still have land in the family. I attended Colorado State, and I received my BA in Soil and Crop Sciences. Since then I have lived in several different states and have worked on organic farms. I enjoy farm work – almost as much as I enjoy traveling. Inspecting allows me to experience a little of both. Organic farming has always been a staple in my life; when I was young we grew organic wheat. My father did organic inspections for a period before the National Organic Program (NOP) was created.

I have visited friends and family in New Mexico for years; it is a joy to finally reside here. I look forward to getting to know the state and the people.

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**August 11th NMSU Sustainable Agriculture Science Center at Alcalde Field Day/Open House**

**When:** 7:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Thursday, August 11, 2016

**Where:** Agriculture Science Center at Alcalde
371 County Road 40
Alcalde, NM 87511

Registration: 7:30 a.m.
Welcome: 8:00 a.m.
Field Tours: 9:00 a.m.
Lunch at noon
Special topics: 1:00 p.m.

Event Updates and Map: [http://alcaldesc.nmsu.edu/](http://alcaldesc.nmsu.edu/)  
(505) 852-4241

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**February 17-18, 2017**

New Mexico Organic Farming Conference  
Albuquerque, New Mexico
Online Managed-Grazing Tutorial Available
Free Interactive Lessons Can Help Land and Finances

Strategic livestock management can improve soil health, pastures, and profits. A new online tutorial, “Managed Grazing Tutorial,” by the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) goes in-depth into how changing the way grazing animals are managed can improve both the condition of your land and your bottom line.


The interactive tutorial is divided into a series of stand-alone lessons, so participants can progress at their own pace. The lessons include these subjects:
- Grazing Management: Inventory
- Managed Grazing Infrastructure: Fencing and Water
- Managing the Mature Stand
- Intensifying Managed Grazing
- Stockpiling Grass

The lessons are taught by NCAT specialists who are also livestock producers with years of experience managing their own pastures. Their detailed presentations along with real-world examples and links to other resources will help producers both refine and build managed grazing systems regardless of their experience.

For more information about the tutorial, contact Dave Scott, NCAT Livestock Specialist, at 800-346-9140 or daves@ncat.org.

Caveat Emptor!
Although a product may promise special ingredients, would you be willing to pay $150 if you knew all it contained was colored water? To help keep this from happening, the Oregon Department of Agriculture’s Fertilizer Program samples and analyzes products as part of its consumer protection role. Most recently the program looked at products that contain microorganisms – or at least claim to have them. The results of the analyses are less than encouraging.

“Some products have met the claim and have passed, but the percentage is very low,” says Toby Primbs, fertilizer enforcement specialist.

ODA’s Fertilizer Program is the only one in the nation checking on ingredient claims made for microbiological products. The program began testing products claiming to contain beneficial bacteria and one type of beneficial fungi (Trichoderma) in 2013. Of the 51 products tested for bacteria, only 9 met their guarantees. Of the 14 products tested for Trichoderma, none met their guarantees. Last year the program began testing products with mycorrhizal fungi, which form partnerships with plant roots for mutual benefit. Seventeen products were tested, and only three met the guarantees made on the product label.

“Many of these products were being sold at a premium price, yet nobody was looking to see if these microbes were actually in the product,” says ODA fertilizer specialist Matt Haynes. “We had anecdotal information that some products had nothing added despite what was said on the label. Once we started looking, more often than not, the companies making these products were not able to back their claims.”

As an example, a one-liter retail container of a fertilizer product that claimed to have both fungi and bacteria sold for $87.50, yet testing did not indicate the presence of any of the microbes.
Guide Helps Organic Farmers Apply for Buffer Initiative
The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) has published the Organic Farmers’ Guide to the Conservation Reserve Program Field Border Buffer Initiative. The guide is intended to assist organic farmers interested in accessing the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) new Organic Buffer Initiative, and is one of many free resources produced by NSAC for farmers and farm groups. NSAC’s guide includes eligibility and application information, program basics, detailed descriptions of key conservation practices and associated payments, as well as two producer profiles and resources for additional information. Conservation buffers can come in many varieties, but are generally described as a small area or strips of land in permanent vegetation that are designed to slow runoff, provide shelter for wildlife, and prevent erosion along riverbank areas.

Through the Organic Buffer Initiative FSA provides farmers with rental payments, cost-share payments, and in many cases incentive payments for land that is set-aside for conservation buffers for a period of 10-15 years. The initiative helps organic producers limit the impacts of pesticide drift, enhance their conservation systems, and meet National Organic Program (NOP) certification requirements for natural resource and biodiversity conservation.

Unlike the general sign-ups that occur under other CRP programs, CCRP producers may enroll at any time throughout the year. The program also has no bidding and ranking system, and the land is enrolled automatically if it meets the eligibility criteria.

CCRP eligible practices include: riparian buffers, wildlife habitat buffers, wetland buffers, filter strips, wetland restoration, grass waterways, shelterbelts, windbreaks, living snow fences, contour grass strips, salt tolerant vegetation, and shallow water areas for wildlife.

Under the new organic initiative, farmers are free to use whichever CCRP eligible practice or suite of practices best suits their particular needs. Click here to download the full guide.

Cornell Soil Health Assessment
The Cornell soil health assessment was created to help farmers develop appropriate management solutions to build healthy soils. Visit the Cornell soil health website to find more information about the assessment, Cornell's soil health testing services, and a training manual that provides a how-to guide for soil sampling and guidelines on how to conduct your own soil health assessment.

Focusing on soil health improves productivity, reduces the need for external inputs, and increases a farm's resilience to extreme weather events. A farmer can send his or her soil samples to the Cornell laboratory to receive a soil test package that provides field-specific information on soil health constraints in physical and biological processes, in addition to a standard nutrient analysis to help with soil health management.

The assessment specifically measures soil health indicators including soil texture, aggregate stability, available water capacity, field penetration resistance, potentially mineralizable nitrogen, active carbon, organic matter content, root health, chemical analyses, and macro- and micro-nutrient level assessment. Depending on the test results, prescriptions to improve soil health can include reducing tillage, planting cover crops, planning crop rotations, preventing damage to wet soil, and importing organic matter, nutrients and other amendments.
With a Little Help from Your Friends: Group Gap

After three years in the pilot stage, United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) this week announced that GroupGAP, a new certification option ideal for small and mid-sized farms, will be available nationwide.

GAP (short for “good agricultural practices) certification is a USDA audit program through which producers can demonstrate their compliance with food safety requirements to purchasers and retailers. Historically, GAP certification has been out of reach for many small and mid-sized farms and beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers because of the price. GroupGAP provides a long-awaited alternative option, wherein grower groups, farmer coops, and food collaboratives can share the certification cost by pooling together.

Under the traditional USDA GAP model, each farm is audited individually for compliance with industry-recognized food safety standards. Under the GroupGAP model, a group of farmers can come together and collaboratively develop a quality management system through a central organizing entity such as a producer cooperative or food hub, which serves as an intermediary between the farmers and institutional or wholesale buyers. Through the central entity, qualified individuals internally audit the participating farms. AMS’s role in Group GAP is to audit both the group quality management system as well as to directly audit a percentage of the farms at random.

For farmers and growers alike, group certification provides access to a myriad of benefits. By working as a collective, farmers expand opportunities for peer learning and training; collectively share risk, equipment, and other knowledge resources; and can gain access to new markets. In turn, GroupGAP benefits buyers by aggregating groups of producers through a central entity. This helps buyers meet growing consumer demand for food with verifiable commitments to food safety and growing standards by pooling broad bases of local producers who meet those standards.

What does GroupGAP have to do with (FSMA)?

Producers have typically sought GAP certification in order to access markets where such certification is required. Today growers are under added market pressure to obtain food safety certifications because of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA)’s new food safety rules established through FSMA. FDA has made it clear that while audits are not required under the new rules, private audits will nevertheless play a role in FDA’s compliance strategy for the new food safety rule for produce farmers.

AMS is currently working with FDA on a joint GAP review project, which will review the alignment of the USDA GAP program (including GroupGAP) to FSMA’s requirements. Following review, USDA GAP and GroupGAP would undergo any necessary modifications so they provide at least the same baseline requirements as FSMA. These revisions are expected to be in place before the final compliance implementation date in the FSMA Produce Rule.

New Sources of Contaminated Pollen Discovered

Nature Communications reports: Recent efforts to evaluate the contribution of neonicotinoid insecticides to worldwide pollinator declines have focused on honey bees and the chronic levels of exposure experienced when foraging on crops grown from neonicotinoid-treated seeds. However, few studies address non-crop plants as a potential route of pollinator exposure to neonicotinoid and other insecticides. Here we show that pollen collected by honey bee foragers in maize- and soybean-dominated landscapes is contaminated throughout the growing season with multiple agricultural pesticides, including the neonicotinoids used as seed treatments. Notably, however, the highest levels of contamination in pollen are pyrethroid insecticides targeting mosquitoes and other nuisance pests. Furthermore, pollen from crop plants represents only a tiny fraction of the total diversity of pollen resources used by honey bees in these landscapes, with the principle sources of pollen originating from non-cultivated plants. These findings provide fundamental information about the foraging habits of honey bees in these landscapes.

For more information visit the Wallace Center GroupGap site: http://static1.squarespace.com/static/520ed291e4b066a62d157faa/t/54d25dd2e4b0cd9033a2e516/1423072722034/01.12.15+Introduction+to+GroupGAP.pdf
Organic Farm Snapshots

Joseph Alfaro Hoophouse, January 2016

Ramon Alvarez hay field, 2015
News From the National Organic Program

Status of Recommendations from the National Organic Standards Board
To facilitate public awareness of the status of all NOSB recommendations, the NOP has developed three indices, one each for recommendations related to practice standards, the national list, and the sunset review process. For each recommendation the indices show the date the recommendation was made, the action associated with the recommendation (rulemaking, guidance, etc.), the status of the action (outstanding, in process, or complete), and any relevant notes. The NOSB Recommendation Indices will be living documents that will be regularly updated and posted on the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) website.

NOP Compost Guidance Violates Requirement for Public Comment
The U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California has ruled in the lawsuit against USDA brought by the Center for Food Safety and others alleging that USDA violated the Administrative Procedures Act (APA) when it issued the green waste compost guidance without providing public notice and comment. The District Court found that USDA did violate the APA and vacated the green waste compost guidance effective August 22, 2016. This means any green waste compost purchased before that date would still be subject to the existing guidance. If USDA chooses to appeal the decision, it must do so within 60 days.

USDA Offers New Loans for Portable Farm Storage and Handling Equipment
USDA will provide a new financing option to help farmers purchase portable storage and handling equipment.

The program also offers a new “microloan” option, which allows applicants seeking less than $50,000 to qualify for a reduced down payment of 5 percent and no requirement to provide three years of production history. Farms and ranches of all sizes are eligible. The microloan option is expected to be of particular benefit to smaller farms and ranches and specialty crop producers who may not have access to commercial storage or on-farm storage after harvest. These producers can invest in equipment like conveyors, scales or refrigeration units, and trucks that can store commodities before delivering them to markets. Producers do not need to demonstrate the lack of commercial credit availability to apply.

Earlier this year FSA significantly expanded the list of commodities eligible for Farm Storage Facility Loans (FSFL). Eligible commodities now include aquaculture, floriculture, fruits (including nuts) and vegetables, corn, grain sorghum, rice, oilseeds, oats, wheat, triticale, spelt, buckwheat, lentils, chickpeas, dry peas sugar, peanuts, barley, rye, hay, honey, hops, maple sap, unprocessed meat and poultry, eggs, milk, cheese, butter, yogurt, and renewable biomass. FSFL microloans can also be used to finance wash and pack equipment used post-harvest before a commodity is placed in cold storage.

For more information get in touch with LeAnn Gibbs at (505) 761-4932

The Going Price….. Organic Specialty Crops Market Information
The AMS Specialty Crops Market News recently published the National Specialty Crops Organic Summary. Published daily, this report provides organic price information at terminal markets, shipping points, and retail advertised prices throughout the United States. The report highlights prices for 133 organic fruits, vegetables, herbs, and other specialty crops as well as movement data including domestic shipment volumes and import information.

Organic Dairy Market Information
The AMS Dairy Market News recently published its biweekly National Organic Dairy Report. This most recent report states that a total of 213 million pounds of organic milk product sales for February 2016 were up 7.3 percent from February last year and up 5.6 percent for January and February compared with the same two months of 2015. This represents the highest volumes of organic milk sales during February for any of the years for which AMS has reported data, 2010-2016. Total organic milk sales for January and February also represent the highest volumes for those two months of any year 2010-2016.

To view the entire report, visit https://www.ams.usda.gov/mnreports/dybdairyorganic.pdf
Resources
Due to budget constraints, the Organic Advisor position will be vacant starting August 1, 2016. Please use these resources to find help with your questions.

Update your Organic System Plan, ask a question about using a new input, ask about the status of your inspection, etc.: certifier@nmda.nmsu.edu

Applications for organic certification and supplemental forms: http://www.nmda.nmsu.edu/marketing/organic-program/applications-for-organic-certification/

Applications for Cost-Share (partial reimbursement of your certification costs): http://www.nmda.nmsu.edu/marketing/organic-program/application-for-cost-share-reimbursement/

OMRI database of inputs allowed in organic production (inputs must be listed on your Organic System Plan and be approved by the certifier even if they are on this list): http://www.omri.org/omri-lists

Regulations on egg, nursery, and milk production: http://www.nmda.nmsu.edu/marketing/organic-program/crop-livestock-and-processing-regulators/

Search for certified organic producers on the national database: https://apps.ams.usda.gov/integrity/

Marketing materials (twist ties, shelf-talkers, plant labels, signs) http://www.newmexicotradition.com/login/ (If you are not a member, call (575) 646-4929 to sign up — it’s free.)

Marketing Assistance (trade shows, cooperative advertising, labeling): http://www.nmda.nmsu.edu/marketing/funding-assistance-programs/

Find your county extension agent: http://aces.nmsu.edu/county/

Pest Management Help: https://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/biorationals/

Contact NRCS for information about financial assistance with hoop houses, pollinator planting, irrigation improvements, cover crops: http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/nm/contact/local/?cid=stelprdb1256783

Contact FSA about loans and microloans for land and infrastructure: http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/stateoffapp?my-state=nm&area=home&subject=prog&topic=landing

Contact the Environment Department for information about food processing regulations: https://www.env.nm.gov/district-field-offices/

If none of these links help, please call Elaine Padilla (575) 646-2752 or Julia Conlogue (505) 841-9425 and they will help you find what you are looking for.
OMRI Products Dropped from Listing

Please remember that we have dropped the pages of updates on products that have been removed from the OMRI list of products approved for use in organic production. Before you buy a product you think is OMRI-listed (you’ve used it before or someone you know has used it), go to the OMRI website at http://www.omri.org/omri-lists and find the product. Print out the page that shows the approval EVERY time you purchase a product, even if you have been using the same stuff for years. Be sure to keep your invoice for purchase of the product; and if this is the first time you have used the product, you MUST update your Organic System Plan BEFORE you use the product. You can do this by sending an e-mail to: certifier@nmda.nmsu.edu. WAIT for an affirmative reply before using the product.

Signing off…..

My horse is saddled up and her nose is pointed in a new (yet not so new) direction. Retiring is a funny experience. I can hardly wait to do more gardening (both at the school where I volunteer and at home), work on my house, spend more time with friends, and maybe do some writing. But I will miss all the friends I have worked with in organic farming, ranching and processing in New Mexico, and the excitement of seeing firsthand the power of caring stewards to regenerate our land. So don’t be surprised if you find me on your doorstep for a visit; and please, if there is anything I can help with, don’t hesitate to get in touch with me at ophyos@gmail.com or (505) 377-9768. It’s been a joy to know you. Until we meet again!

—Joanie

Happy Summer!
Brett, Elaine, Ive, Joanie, and Stacy